agreement on agriculture, the Government has put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the imports of agricultural commodities including pulses; and is committed to providing adequate protection to the domestic producers by resorting to the various WTO compatible measures which include appropriate calibration of applied tariffs within the bound levels, imposition of anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard action under certain specified circumstances. As a sequel to these measures, during the year 2001-2002, the import duty on pulses has been raised from 0 percent to 5 percent. The Government has also been implementing the scheme of Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for safeguarding the interest of domestic farmers. Under this Scheme, the Government announces, each season, the MSPs for major agricultural commodities including pulses (Arhar, Moong, Urad, Gram and Masur). Lentil has, recently, been covered under the MSP Scheme. The Prices such fixed, not only cover the cost of production, but also provide for a reasonable profit to the farmers. National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED) which is the designated central nodal agency for the procurement of pulses, intervenes in the market whenever market prices rule below the MSP fixed by the Government.

Cotton production

†2765. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether production of cotton in the new season is likely to be on the same scale as in the season;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the sowing of cotton in major cotton growing States has got delayed; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and to what extent the production of cotton in above States is likely to be affected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPADYESSO NAIK): (a) and (b) The estimates of the production of cotton in the year 2001-2002 have not yet been made. However, according to advance estimates for 2000-2001, the production of cotton is expected to be 93.9 lakh bales of 170 kgs. each during 2000-2001 compared to 116.4 lakh bales during 1999-2000.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) and (d) Generally the progress of area sown in major cotton producing States during the current year is normal.

Loss of standing crops due to drought

†2766. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether heavy losses are caused every year to standing crops in various regions of the country, by drought conditions caused by scarcity of water;

(b) if so, the estimates of losses to standing crops during 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, the quantum of crops so damaged and the States in which these crops have been damaged; and

(c) the corresponding percentage of the total losses, to the total agricultural production in those particular years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) to (c) Natural calamities including drought do also cause damage of varying magnitude to crops, depending on intensity of the calamity. It is, however, difficult to estimate the damage caused to standing crops, resulting in loss of production of foodgrains, due to natural calamities. 5 States had reported drought situation during 1998-99, 11 States during 1999-2000 and 10 States during 2000-01. As per reports received from the States, about 90 lakh ha. crop area during 1998-99, 141 lakh ha. during 1999-2000 and 255 lakh ha. during 2000-01 have been affected by drought.

Food processing park at Ernakulam

2767. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Kerala Government has submitted any proposal for setting up a food processing park at Ernakulam; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposal, alongwith the action taken by the Central Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TH. CHAOBA SINGH): (a) and (b) Department of Food Processing Industries,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.